1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX3 Vedda AX3

PREFACE

THE Veddas have been regarded as one of the most primitive of existing races, and it has long been felt desirable that their social life and religious ideas should be investigated as thoroughly as possible. The welcome opportunity of conducting this research was afforded me on the initiative of Dr A.C. Haddon, who suggested to the Honourable Mr John Ferguson and Dr Arthur Willey that it was desirable that the Ceylon Government should continue its enlightened policy of studying the anthropology, archaeology and history of Ceylon and its peoples. This proposal received the warmest support of the Governor, Sir Henry Blake, G.C.M.G., and his successor the present Governor, His Excellency Sir Henry E. McCallum, G.C.M.G., A.D.C., of the Colonial Secretary and of the other members of the Legislative Council who made a liberal grant covering the expenses of the expedition in the field.

Not only was the work urgently needed on account of its scientific importance, but it was known that the Veddas were a numerically small people verging on extinction, and so affected by contact with Tamils and Sinhalese that if they were not studied promptly there was every possibility that it would soon be too late to study them at all; indeed, with all my efforts I was able to meet only four families, and hear of two more, who I believe had never practised cultivation. Pure-blooded Veddas are not quite so rare as this statement implies. The Danigala community, the best known "wild" Veddas of Ceylon, are still reasonably pure-blooded, though they have adopted many Sinhalese habits, including cultivation, and have assumed the rôle of professional primitive man. They are commonly fetched to be interviewed by travellers at the nearest rest house, where they appear clad only in the traditional scanty Vedda garment, whereas, when not on show, they dress very much as the neighbouring peasant Sinhalese.

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